

Client: Utah  
Source: Fall Line Skiing (Main)  
Date: 01 January 2011  
Page: 26  
Reach: 22000  
Size: 349cm2  
Value: 677.06

**UTAH**  
LIFE ELEVATED

**PATRICK THORNE**

## THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE SKI PASS



**AS YOU MAY** have gathered, I know far too much about ski resorts, passes, and prices. And was, therefore, charged with compiling the first ever Golden Ticket list last winter. The plan was simple: find the 10 most expensive liftpasses in the world. The rules were straightforward too: the price could be for any week in the season (hence some of the eye-watering amounts you'll see below, which often cover New Year in the US, etc). This year you'll get the top five European resorts, plus the top five worldwide.

### WHAT'S CHANGED?

Well, exchange rates are always key. The pound is still down in the dumps. The price of Telluride's six-day ticket for example is the same as last year at \$522, but the current exchange rate has put it up £20 for us. It's a similar story with the Swiss Franc, and although the most expensive ticket in Europe - Aosta, which gives access to resorts including Zermatt and Cervinia - actually costs 30 Francs less than last year, the price has increased a little for Brits. Only the Euro-zone prices have improved slightly, down about 2%, like for like, on last winter. It also means the Four Valleys enter the top five chart, knocking out Paradiski (last year's number three), despite it rising to

€249 for a full pass. Although their 2010 season is over, Australian ticket

prices spiked too, with a six-day pass to one of the top resorts, thanks in part to currency fluctuations, touching the equivalent of £350! Ridiculous! But things have become more sensible since, so it doesn't make our final list.

### NOT WHERE, BUT WHEN

Austrian and Italian resorts have always had different pricing depending on when you travel during the season: high season means highest price, unsurprisingly. Then the Americans lead the 'book online to get a lower price' policy. Meanwhile, it now seems that the price of your ski ticket increasingly depends on when you buy it, as much as when you go. This has been the norm for years with season tickets - buy as soon as the season finishes and you pay less than if you buy just before the next season begins, but now that thinking is moving to regular six-day tickets, too. So it was that several ski areas in France and Italy were offering 10% to 20% discounts on liftpasses if you bought in advance this autumn.

### NORTH AMERICA

Yes, they have the world's most expensive liftpasses but they're also

the biggest discounters, so fortunately very few people pay the headline prices we've got here. It seems US resorts price tickets highly, just like Tesco do with their cheap wine, so they can offer discounts and still make the profit they first intended.

### FAMILIES

Finding the best deal is a nightmare. There's nothing for it to but to sit

down with a calculator if you want to save hundreds of pounds. French resorts are, on the whole, among the most expensive for children, with kids paying more, younger. Aware of this, a range of complex 'family discounts' are available (all with varied terms and conditions). In Switzerland, adult liftpasses tend to cost a bit more in resorts like Zermatt but these same resorts don't ask kids to pay at all until age 10, and then only half the adult price. Compare this to French resorts, which ask kids to pay 70% of the adult price from age four, and the full adult price from age 11 or 12. Most extreme is the Mont Blanc regional pass costing €205 for six days for a four-year-old child! Austria and Italy fall between these two pricing models. Maybe get your teenagers to look at family pricing as a homework project... those at college could do a thesis on it, it's that complex!

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THE RESULTS										
RANK	WORLD'S FIVE MOST EXPENSIVE SIX-DAY ADULT LIFTPASSES*					EUROPE'S FIVE MOST EXPENSIVE SIX-DAY ADULT LIFTPASSES				
	1 (1st, 2009)	▲ 1 (2nd, 2009)	3 (3rd, 2009)	3 (3rd, 2009)	5 (5th, 2009)	1 (1st, 2009)	▲ 2 (4th, 2009)	▲ 3 (5th, 2009)	▼ 4 (2nd, 2009)	5 (New entry)
RESORT	Steamboat, USA	Deer Valley, USA	Vail, USA	Beaver Creek, USA	Aspen, USA	Aosta, Italy/Switzerland	Saas Fee, Switzerland	Ski Engadin, Switzerland	Ski Pass Mont Blanc, France/Italy/Switzerland	The Four Valleys, Switzerland
PRICE	£359.92	£359.92	£356.09	£356.09	£344.61	£277.32	£242.66	£234.16	£226.38	£227.61
▲▼	▲ £24.23	▲ £35.72	▲ £34.80	▲ £34.80	▲ £34.81	▲ £4.18	▲ £22.83	▲ £20.95	▼ £4.25	N/A
DETAILS	Over 180 runs, 2965 acres, superb glades	2002 Olympic venue, 1825 acres	Over 400 runs and a huge 5289 acres	1805 acres, pass valid for Vail and vice-versa	Four ski areas, with more than 325 runs	20 ski areas and over 1000 acres	Three resorts – 245km of runs and over 40 lifts	350km of piste, 10 ski areas, inc. St Moritz	Biggest of Chamonix's three ticket options	Largest Swiss area: includes Verbier
HOW WE DID IT										
All research done, prices converted, in a single day this autumn – 500 ski areas in 30 countries were checked. Prices are for peak-season week, over New Year's Day 2011. Other passes covering part of the ski areas quoted or overlapping areas, or special deals including liftpasses, may be available!										
*Although due to be one of the first resorts to open in the world, seven days after our research, Copper Mountain had not announced its prices at time of going to press but last season peaked at \$652 for six days so is likely to be in top five, knocking Aspen down to sixth, this time.										